

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 014676 TOSEC 010072

FOR HODDING CARTER FROM TRATTNER

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SOPN, OVIP (VANCE, CYRUS R.)

SUBJECT: SUMMARY OF DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING, JANUARY 18,
1978

NO. 9

1. SOMALIA-ETHIOPIA: SPOKESMAN (TRATTNER) WAS STILL IN POSITION OF BEING UNABLE CONFIRM REPORTS OF SOVIET INVOLVEMENT IN FIGHTING AROUND PORT CITY OF MASSAWA; HE DID SAY U.S. HAD ISSUED NOTICE TO U.S. SHIPPING TO AVOID MASSAWA BECAUSE OF FIGHTING THERE. HE DECLINED GO INTO DETAILS OF SECRETARY'S TALKS WITH DOBRYNIN JANUARY 14 ON THIS SUBJECT, INCLUDING QUESTION WHETHER HE HAD INDICATED U.S. POLICY ON SUPPLYING SOMALIA WITH ARMS WOULD CHANGE IF FIGHTING MOVED INTO SOMALI TERRITORY. TO TAKEN QUESTION WHETHER WE HAD TOLD IRANIANS AND SAUDIS WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE SOMALIA HAS BEEN INVADED, ANSWER WAS THAT WE HAVE HAD MANY OCCASIONS TO EXCHANGE INFORMATION AND VIEWPOINTS

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ON HORN WITH SAUDIS AND IRANIANS; AT NO POINT HAVE WE INDICATED THAT ETHIOPIAN TROOPS HAVE CROSSED INTO SOMALIA, NOR ARE WE AWARE THERE IS ANY MISCONCEPTION ON THAT POINT. WE HAVE BEEN ASSURED AT HIGHEST LEVELS OF ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT THAT ITS MILITARY FORCES DO NOT PLAN CROSS BORDER INTO SOMALIA.

2. QUESTION AROSE WHY--IF WE OPPOSE INJECTION OF WEAPONS INTO CONFLICT--WE HAVE NOT CANCELLED EXPORT LICENSES FOR MATERIAL IN PIPELINE TO ETHIOPIA. ANSWER WAS THAT AT THE TIME OUR MILITARY SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP WITH ETHIOPIA WAS TERMINATED LAST APRIL, SPARE PARTS FOR U.S.-ORIGIN MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND SOME TRUCKS WERE IN HANDS OF FREIGHT FORWARDER OF ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT. SPOKESMAN ADDED HIS UNDERSTANDING THAT CURRENTLY, IN ANY CASE, NO MATERIAL IS MOVING. QUESTION WAS TAKEN WHETHER PIPELINE HAS BEEN CUT OFF; AF NOW STRUGGLING WITH ANSWER TO THIS DELICATE PROBLEM.

3. IN LIGHT OF SEVERAL QUESTIONS IN PAST FEW DAYS REQUESTING CONFIRMATION OF VARIOUS MILITARY EVENTS IN HORN, SPOKESMAN SAID WE NOT IN POSITION TO RENDER BLOW BY BLOW ACCOUNT OR TO CONFIRM EVERY BOMB DROPPED OR SHOT FIRED. WE HAVE LIMITED ABILITY TO REPORT ON THESE DEVELOPMENTS AND ARE FREQUENTLY UNABLE TO CONFIRM THEM. AS DAYS GO BY AND CONFLICT CONTINUES, WE NOT HOPEFUL OF BEING ABLE TO DO SO.

4. STATUS OF ANGLO-AMERICAN INITIATIVE ON RHODESIA:
SPOKESMAN SAID CONTACTS AND DISCUSSIONS CONTINUE AND WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSALS ARE BEST BASIS FOR ENDURING SETTLEMENT. WE BELIEVE ANY SETTLEMENT THAT IS INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTABLE AND WHICH PROVIDES
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REAL CHANCE FOR LASTING SOLUTION MUST EMBODY PRINCIPLES CONTAINED IN THOSE PROPOSALS AND MUST INCLUDE ALL PARTIES CONCERNED. ASKED ABOUT U.S. REACTION TO POSSIBLE AGREEMENT BETWEEN SMITH AND INTERNAL MODERATES, SPOKESMAN SAID WE WOULD HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE EXACTLY WHAT THEY COME UP WITH FIRST. FOR THE MOMENT, BASED ON WHAT WE KNOW OF SMITH'S DISCUSSIONS WITH MODERATES, WE BELIEVE ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSALS REMAIN BEST POSSIBLE BASIS FOR SOLUTION.

5. SECRETARY'S VISIT TO TURKEY-GREECE: QUESTIONED ON SUGGESTION IN PRESS THAT SECRETARY INVITED HIMSELF TO ANKARA AND ATHENS TO DISCUSS CYPRUS AND THAT NEITHER GOVERNMENT WANTED HIM TO DO SO, SPOKESMAN REJECTED IDEA OF SELF-INVITATION AND REPEATED THAT SECRETARY NOT GOING TO EITHER COUNTRY TO DISCUSS CYPRUS SPECIFICALLY OR EXCLUSIVELY. HE IS GOING TO DISCUSS RANGE OF CONCERNS AND MATTERS OF INTEREST WHICH, OF COURSE, INCLUDE CYPRUS. HE IS NOT GOING TO EITHER CAPITAL WITH INTENT TO MAKE CYPRUS A MAJOR POINT OF AGENDA OR WITH ANY AMERICAN PLAN OR PROPOSAL FOR CYPRUS.

6. FYI: WE BEGINNING GET QUESTIONS ON MEETING SCHEDULED

JANUARY 19 IN DEPARTMENT WITH BRITISH, FRENCH AND GERMANS

ON GENERAL SUBJECT OF ETHIOPIA-SOMALIA CONFLICT. WE
WILL CONFIRM MEETING, TRYING TO AVOID CONVEYING QUAD-
RIPARTITE FLAVOR AND POINTING OUT THAT IT IS NATURAL
WE AND OTHER INTERESTED ALLIES SHOULD FROM TIME TO
TIME CONFER AND CONSULT ON SUCH MATTERS. CHRISTOPHER

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